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EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

## Application of environmental norms by military establishments: action taken by the secretariat for the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/5

## Report of the Executive Director


### Summary

The purpose of the present report is to outline activities taken by the secretariat for the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/5 of 21 May 1993, on application of environmental norms by military establishments. A summary of the information on the issues mentioned in the decision will be found in a supplement to this report.


### Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Take note of the recommendation by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session, in May 1994, inviting UNEP to consider the feasibility of arranging regional meetings, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions and regional organizations, on the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/5 and on how national environmental plans for the military establishment relating to hazardous waste management can be designed and implemented;

(b) Authorize the Executive Director to arrange, within available resources, regional meetings, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions and regional organizations, for the implementation of Governing Council decision 17/5;

(c) Request the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its nineteenth regular session on the outcome of such regional meetings.

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## APPLICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NORMS BY MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS: ACTION TAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION 17/5

### Introduction

1. Paragraph 20.22 (h) of Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, states that Governments should ascertain that their military establishments conform to their nationally applicable environmental norms in the treatment and disposal of hazardous wastes.

2. In its decision 17/5 of 21 May 1993, entitled "Application of environmental norms by military establishments", the Governing Council noted the role of the military sector in the promotion of national environmental goals and objectives in the transition to sustainable development and recognized the need for early action. By the decision, the Council encouraged Governments to establish a national environmental policy for the military sector and invited the Executive Director to collect information on:

(a) National preparations and activities in order to ascertain that their military establishments conform to their national environmental norms in the treatment and disposal of hazardous wastes;

(b) The contribution of the military sector in the achievement of national environmental policies;

(c) Assessments of the damage as well as the need for and feasibility of the clean-up and restoration of areas where damage to the environment has been caused by military activities;

The Council requested the Executive Director to report to it at its eighteenth session on the issues referred to in subparagraphs (a)-(c) above. The present report has been prepared in accordance with that request.

### Action taken

3. On 2 May 1994, the Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal sent a letter to the focal points designated by the Parties to the Convention, requesting the information as mentioned in paragraph 2 of decision 17/5. By 15 February 1995, several Governments had provided relevant information. A summary of the information from those Governments will be found in a supplement to the present report referred to in paragraph 8 below.

4. At its second session, held in New York from 16 to 27 May 1994, the Commission on Sustainable Development recalled and reaffirmed decision 17/5 and urged Governments to take action to implement it fully. The Commission invited UNEP to consider the feasibility of arranging regional meetings, in cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions and regional organizations, on the implementation of the decision and on how national environmental plans for the military establishment relating to hazardous waste management can be designed and implemented (see E/1994/33-E/CN.17/1994/20, chap. I, sect. E, paras. 186 and 187).

5. During the first session of the Committee on Environmental Policy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), held in Geneva on 30 and 31 May 1994, the delegation of Sweden expressed the view that UNEP in cooperation

with ECE should follow up the decision taken at the second session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to consider the feasibility of arranging a regional meeting on the application of environmental norms by the military sector and declared its intention to organize a workshop on this topic.

6. Pursuant to Governing Council decision 17/5 and the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Assistant Executive Director for Earthwatch Coordination and Environmental Assessment, on 18 August 1994, sent a letter to United Nations regional commissions and other relevant regional intergovernmental organizations seeking their views on the feasibility of organizing a workshop within the respective regions with a view to the implementation of the decision. A letter was sent also to the Government of Sweden concerning its statement at the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy and seeking its view on organizing a regional meeting. In response, ECE, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific have informed the secretariat that they are interested in arranging regional meetings. Within the ECE region, the Government of Sweden offered to host such a meeting. In December 1994, the secretariat of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) informed UNEP that the Government of the Philippines had shown its interest in hosting a workshop. In January 1995, the secretariat of the League of Arab States stated that it would put the matter before its Council in March 1995.

7. In relation to assessments of damage and to the need for and feasibility of clean-up and restoration of areas where damage to the environment has been caused by military activities, UNEP has initiated an expert study on legal issues relating to liability and compensation for environmental damage caused by military activities.

8. With regard to the ECE region, UNEP, in cooperation with ECE, will convene a Meeting on Military Activities and the Environment, to be hosted by the Government of Sweden in Linköping from 27 to 30 June 1995. The Meeting, taking into account the relevant experience of ECE member States, will consider the role of the military sector in the promotion of national environmental goals and objectives as well as the establishment of a national environmental policy for the sector, including practical ways and means of reaching environmental policy objectives. The Meeting will be attended by representatives of both environmental and military authorities in the countries concerned. During the Meeting, information on the issues mentioned in Governing Council decision 17/5 is expected to be collected. The resulting recommendations will be directed to the Governments of ECE member States, UNEP and ECE as a basis for future activities.

9. In its invitation to the Linköping meeting, UNEP requested of the Governments of the ECE member States to provide the secretariat, by the end of March 1995, with a brief paper containing the information addressing the issues referred to in decision 17/5. The secretariat will compile information received from those Governments and relevant international organizations and make it available to the Meeting. That information from the ECE member States, together with the information provided by the focal points designated under the Basel Convention, will be compiled and a summary will be made available to the Governing Council, as a supplement to the present report.

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